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Gond AW32

/Information concerning the ghotul or gotul, the bachelors' and adolescents' dormitory, will be found in category 883, Adolescent Activities. /

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

V. MENSTRUATION

• 561 Neither in the ghotul nor outside are the age-grades of Muria children very strictly defined. There are, for example, no rites of transfer from one age-grade to another, but generally four different stages in a child's growth to maturity are recognized. The first stage for a boy or girl is babyhood; the boy is called *pila*, the girl *pili* or *noni* (daughter). This stage lasts a year. The child then becomes a *tākna pēka* or *pēda* (feminine *tākna pēki* or *pēdi*), the word *tākna* meaning 'a toddler'. This stage lasts for two or three years till the child begins to play about the house and perform little tasks, when it is known as a *leka* or *leki*. At the age of seven or eight the boy becomes a *lāyor pēka* or *nangriya*, the second word implying that he is now able to go along with his father behind the plough. A girl of the same age is known as *lāya pēki*, *norwa lāya* (meaning 'immature', a girl who does not yet have to wash after her menstrual period) or in Halbi *tāndak pāni ānu leki*. Finally a girl on passing her menarche becomes a *lāya*, *torita*, *tarni*, *dāngri*. She is now *jwān* or *masi jwān*, mature. A boy too is now called *lāyor*, *dāngra*, *dinda* (meaning unmarried) or *jwān* (meaning mature).

841 The significant moment in these stages of growth is obviously a girl's first menstruation. This is a crisis of enormous importance to her both socially and psychologically. The fact that she is subject to this monthly cycle sets her as woman in an entirely different category to man. Menstrual blood makes her dangerous, infectious while alive; it may turn her into a ghost of dread and horror after death. A dozen names and expressions for this condition testify to the importance it has in the Muria mind. It will be most convenient to give them in tabular form: all, except the last three, are Gondi.

<i>Pendawoghai</i>	'Her private parts are flowing.'
<i>Kata pongla</i>	'The bank of the field is broken.'
<i>Naur danta</i>	'Blood is flowing.'
<i>Tora pongla</i>	'Blood is flowing.'
<i>Arro dta</i>	'She is taboo.'
<i>Atāna jyo</i>	'She is not cooking.'
<i>Arka chhande kita</i>	'She's in the position of one who may not touch cooking-pots.'
<i>Pirita</i>	'She is wrung out like a dhoti.'
<i>Ghāt utaris</i>	'She can't go to the water-place.'
<i>Bhāta me hona</i>	'To be outside,' i.e. she cannot enter the house.
<i>Dhār bohīs</i>	'Blood is flowing.'

The first menstruation is called *yete aria* ('the call to water') in Gondi and *phulsundri* ('the blossoming of the flower') in Halbi.

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343 In many villages, especially those to the west where the influence of the Abujhmar-Muria is strong, the Muria build separate huts where their women can be segregated at this period.¹ Sometimes they make one communal hut for the whole village; sometimes there is one hut for a group of houses; occasionally a big house with a large family has a hut to itself. The Muria do not generally build such huts outside the village, but in some isolated spot within its borders. The huts are usually wretched little buildings with small doors. Inside may be seen a bed, a cooking-hearth, a few pots, some strips of cloth, a little breward. The hut is built by the *chelik*—no married man may help—who are paid by the village women with liquor for their services. Every year at

¹ Among many other villages may be mentioned Serandi, Chingnar, Kaleparas, Hochus, Pachera and Talchera. The huts are called in Gondi *utār-jurmas* (the hut that must not be touched) or *yete nūyāns lon* (the hut for bathing in water).